

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE,

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, NOV. 13, 1796

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED

FOUR SKELETONS OF SERMONS

UPON THE SAME TEXT,

TREATED IN FOUR DIFFERENT WAYS,

WITH A VIEW TO ILLUSTRATE ALL

MR. C L A U D E's

RULES OF COMPOSITION AND TOPICS OF DISCOURSE.

BY THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M.A.

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*The above is intended as an APPENDIX to Claude's Essay and the
Hundred Skeletons before published.*

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P R E F A C E.



THE Author, having lately published Mr. Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon together with one hundred Skeletons of Sermons, takes the liberty of offering to the Public these few Pages by way of Appendix to that Work. The various Methods, which Mr. Claude has proposed for the treating of different Subjects, are all exemplified in the Skeletons annexed to his Essay*. But the particular Topics, which He mentions as Sources of Invention, may be rendered more profitable by being brought *into one view*. And the *different Modes of treating* Subjects, which He suggests, may be more clearly understood, by being all exemplified *on One Text*. This idea having recently occurred to the Author's mind, He has maturely weighed it; and the more it has engaged his attention, the more firmly He has been persuaded of the utility of carrying it into effect. But he was aware, that, to propose a text in four different points of view without introducing any material Repetitions, was no easy matter.—If indeed He had chosen to take separate parts of the text for the several discourses, He would have found it easy enough to avoid the most distant approach to Tautology: But such a mode of discussing subjects He does not altogether approve: The principal Points in every text ought, in his Judgment, to be the leading features of the discourse formed upon it: And upon that Principle He has constructed the Skeletons which are annexed to this Sermon. Another and a far greater difficulty, was, to include no less than twenty-seven different Topics in one discourse, and yet to preserve (what no Sermon should want) Unity and Perspicuity throughout. But, being very solicitous that nothing should be omitted which could contribute to the Perfection and Usefulness of that invaluable Essay, He has made the Attempt: With what success, He leaves to a candid Public to determine. He begs the Reader however to take Notice, that *the introducing of all the Topics into one discourse is a thing by no means to be imitated*. It is done here, only with an intention to set in a clear light the Nature and Use of those topics.—In fact, a Person, who would write a judicious discourse, must not only not undertake to bring in every topic, but He must not fetter himself by an endeavour to illustrate any topic. He must consult the Nature of the text or subject which He is discussing, and must follow whithersoever that may lead him. The mind, filled with any subject, will naturally suggest such topics as are most calculated to reflect light upon it.

* For Subjects discussed by *Explication*, (which is the Author's most frequent method) see Skel. i. ii. v. &c.—by *Propositions* xliii. xlvii. lxii.—by *Observations* iii. xxx. xl.—by *perpetual Application* iv. liii. lxxv.

Whereas

Whereas a regard to this or that particular topic will be very likely to render the discourse incoherent and confused.

Having mentioned the particular intent of this Appendix, the Author begs leave to add a few words upon the use of Skeletons in general.

It is not possible to say what is the best mode of preaching for every individual, because the Talents of Men are so various, and the extent of their knowledge so different. It seems at all events expedient that a young Minister should for some years pen his Sermons, in order that He may attain a proper mode of expressing his thoughts, and accustom himself to the obtaining of clear, comprehensive and judicious Views of his Subject: But that He should always continue to write every word of his discourses seems by no means necessary. Not that it is at any time expedient for him to deliver an unpremeditated Harangue: this would be very unsuitable to the holy and important Office which He stands up to discharge. But there is a medium between such extemporaneous Effusions and a servile Adherence to what is written: There is a method recommended by the highest authorities, which, after we have written many hundred Sermons, it may not be improper to adopt: The method referred to is, to draw out a full plan or Skeleton of the discourse, with the texts of Scripture which are proper to illustrate or enforce the several parts, and then to express the thoughts in such language as may occur at the time. This plan, if it have some disadvantage in point of accuracy or elegance, has on the other hand great advantages over a written Sermon: It gives a Minister an opportunity of speaking with far more effect to the hearts of men, and of addressing himself to their passions as well by his looks and gesture, as by his words.

Archbishop Secker, in his last Charge, after observing, in reference to the matter of our Sermons, "We have, in fact, lost many of our People to Sectaries by not preaching in a manner sufficiently evangelical." (P. 299), adds, in reference to the manner of our preaching, "There is a middle way*, used by our predecessors, of setting down, in short notes, the Method and principal Heads, and enlarging on them in such words as present themselves at the time: perhaps, duly managed, *this is the best*." (P. 315). He then proceeds to express his disapprobation of, what is called, Mandating of Sermons, or repeating them from memory. This custom obtains much among foreign Divines, and throughout the whole Church of Scotland; and in the Statute Book of our University there is an order from King Charles II. that this should be practised by all the Clergy, as well when preaching before the University and at Court, as before any common Audience†. This shews at least that, if a Minister had thoroughly

* i. e. Between written discourses, and unpremeditated Addresses.

† Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen,

Whereas his Majesty is informed, that the practice of reading Sermons is generally taken

thoroughly studied his discourse, it was deemed no objection against him, that He delivered it without book. But the way proposed by Archbishop Secker seems far preferable on account of the unnecessary increase of labour to the Minister, and because the repeating of a Sermon will most generally appear, as the Archbishop justly expresses it, like "the saying of a Lesson." Many other authorities of the greatest note might be adduced (as those of Bp. Wilkins, Bp. Burnet, Abp. of Cambray, &c.) if it were the Author's wish to vindicate this mode of preaching: But He is far from thinking it proper for all persons or in all places. He considers it however as extremely useful, where a Minister's talents will admit of it. But, after all, the great concern both of Ministers and private Christians is, to enjoy the blessing of God upon their own souls. In whatever manner the Truth may be delivered, whether from a written discourse, or memoriter, or from a well digested plan, they may expect that God will accompany it with a divine energy, if they be looking up to him in the exercise of faith and prayer. In this hope, the following Sermon, and the Skeletons annexed to it, are sent forth into the world: And if, by means of them, the excellency of the Gospel may be more clearly seen, its importance more deeply felt, and its strengthening, comforting, sanctifying efficacy more richly experienced, the Author's labours will be abundantly repaid.

taken up by the Preachers before the University, and therefore continued even before himself, his Majesty hath commanded me to signify to you his pleasure that the said practice which took beginning with the disorders of the late times be wholly laid aside, and that the aforesaid Preachers deliver their Sermons both in Latin and English by memory or without book, as being a way of preaching which his Majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of all foreign Churches, to the custom of the University heretofore, and the nature and intendment of that holy exercise.

And that his Majesty's commands in the premisses may be duly regarded and observed, his farther pleasure is, that the names of all such ecclesiastical persons, as shall continue the present supine and slothful way of preaching, be from time to time signified unto me by the Vice Chancellor for the time being upon pain of his Majesty's displeasure:

MONMOUTH,

Oct. 8th, 1674.]

Page 300 of the Statute Book.



A SERMON,

A

S E R M O N, &c.

MARK XVI. 15, 16.

HE SAID UNTO THEM, GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND
PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE: HE THAT
BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED, BUT HE
THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED.

IT is to be lamented that an unhappy prejudice subsists in the Christian world against the peculiar and most essential doctrines of our holy religion; and that, while ministers defend with zeal and ability the outworks of Christianity, they are at little pains to lead their hearers within the veil, and to unfold to them those blessed truths whereon their salvation depends. Under the idea that moral discourses are more accommodated to the comprehensions of men, and more influential on their practice, they wave all mention of the sublime mysteries of the gospel, and inculcate little more than a system of heathen ethics*. They would be ashamed and almost afraid to make such a passage as this the groundwork of their discourse, lest they should be thought to be contending for some uncertain, unimportant tenets, instead of promoting the interests of piety and virtue. But can any one read such a solemn declaration as that in the text, and account it unworthy of his notice? Can any one consider the circumstances under which it was uttered, or the authoritative manner in which the Apostles were commanded to publish it to the world, and yet think himself at liberty to disregard it? Shall the very
recital

* See this exposed with great perspicuity and strength of argument in Bp. Horley's first charge.

recital of it beget suspicion, as though nothing were desired but to establish the Shibboleth of a party? Let us put away such unbecoming jealousies, and enter in a fair and candid manner into the investigation of the words before us: let us consider that they were among the last words of our blessed Lord while he sojourned upon earth; that they contain his final commission to his Apostles, and, in them, to all succeeding pastors of his church; that they are distinguished by our Lord himself by that honourable appellation, "the Gospel," or Glad Tidings; and that they were delivered by him not only as the rule of our faith, but as the rule of his procedure in the day of Judgment: let us, I say, consider the words in this view, and, with hearts duly impressed and open to conviction, attend to what shall be spoken, while we endeavour to explain the import—vindicate the reasonableness—and display the excellency—of this divine message: and the Lord grant, that, while we are attending to these things, the "word may come, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

I. In explaining the import of our text, we shall have little more to do than to ascertain the meaning of the different terms; for the sense of them being once fixed, the import of the whole will be clear and obvious.

Salvation can mean nothing less than the everlasting happiness of the soul. To limit the term to any temporal deliverance would be to destroy utterly the truth as well as the importance of our Lord's declaration: for though it is true, that they, who believed his prophecies relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, escaped to Pella, and were rescued from the misery in which the Jewish nation was involved, yet the followers of our Lord in that and every age have been subjected to incessant persecutions, and cruel deaths; nor was that deliverance either of so great or so general concern that the Apostles needed to go forth "into all the world," or to preach it to "every creature." Our Lord "came to seek and to save that which was lost;" he came to open a way for the recovery of our fallen race, and to restore men to the happiness which they had forfeited by their iniquities: this is the salvation spoken of in the text, and justly termed, a "salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

This salvation is to be obtained by faith; "he that believeth shall be saved." By the term "believing" we are not to understand a mere assent given to any particular doctrine; for there is not any particular doctrine to which the most abandoned sinner, or even the devils themselves may not assent: in this sense of the word, St. James says "the devils believe, and tremble." The faith intended in the text is far more than an acknowledgment of the truth of the gospel; it is an approbation of it as excellent, and an acceptance of it as suitable. Assent is an act of the understanding only: but true faith is a consent of the will also, with the full concurrence of our warmest affections. it is called in one place

a "believing with the heart;" and in another a "believing with all the heart." In few words, faith is a new and living principle, whereby we are enabled to rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for all the ends and purposes for which he came into the world; a principle, which, at the same time that it takes us off from all self-dependence, leads us to purify our hearts from the love and practice of all sin. To such faith as this our Lord frequently annexes a promise of eternal salvation: in his discourse with Nicodemus he says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that *believeth on him* is not condemned; but he that *believeth not* is condemned already, *because he hath not believed* in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." And in the close of that chapter it is added, "he that *believeth on the Son* hath everlasting life; but he that *believeth not the Son*, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Not that there is any thing meritorious in this grace more than in any other; for, as a grace, it is inferior to love; but salvation is annexed to this rather than to any other, because this alone unites us to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are accepted, and by whose merits we are saved.

To the term Salvation is opposed another of a most awful import, namely, Damnation: as the former can not be limited to any temporal deliverance, so neither can this be limited to any temporal judgment: for, not to mention the express and repeated declarations that the punishment of the wicked will be as "a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched," our Lord, in the very words before us, contrasts the consequences of unbelief with the consequences of faith; thereby manifesting, that they were to be considered by us as of equal magnitude and duration: and, in his account of the final sentence which he will pass upon the righteous and the wicked in the day of judgment, he describes the happiness of the one and the misery of the other by the very same epithet, in order to cut off all occasion of doubt respecting the continuance of either: "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." We are constrained therefore to acknowledge, that the threatening in the text includes nothing less than the everlasting misery of the soul, under the wrath and indignation of God.

This, tremendous as it is, will be the fruit of unbelief; "he that believeth not shall be damned." We must not suppose that the unbelief here spoken of characterizes only professed infidels, who openly avow their contempt of Christianity; for then it would by no means afford a sufficient line of distinction between those that shall be saved, and those that shall perish; seeing that there are many who profess to reverence the Christian revelation, while they live in a constant violation of every duty it enjoins. If, the receiving of Christ as he

is offered in the gospel, be the faith that saves, then the not receiving of Christ in that manner must be the unbelief that condemns. This observation is of great importance: for the generality seem to have no idea that they can be unbelievers, unless they have formally renounced the Christian faith: their consciences are quite clear on this subject: the guilt of unbelief never caused them one moment's uneasiness. But, can any thing be more plain, than, that the same faith, which is necessary to bring us to salvation, must be also necessary to keep us from condemnation? Indeed it is so self-evident a truth, that the very mention of it appears almost absurd; and yet, it will be well if we admit its full force in the point before us: for, however zealous many are to comprehend holy actions and affections in their definitions of saving faith, they are backward enough to acknowledge that a want of those qualities must evidence them to be in a state of unbelief: Yet, till this truth be felt and acknowledged, there is little hope that the gospel will ever profit them at all.

There is a qualifying clause in the text which we must not leave unnoticed; and the rather, because it is added in the former, but omitted in the latter part; "he that believeth, *and is baptized*, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Our Lord had appointed baptism as that rite whereby his disciples should be introduced into the Christian covenant, as the Jews had been by circumcision into the Mosaic covenant: and men's submission to this rite served as a test of their sincerity, and a public badge of their profession. If any were inwardly convinced that the religion of Christ was indeed of divine authority, and were not prevented by insurmountable obstacles from conforming to this rite, they must cheerfully enlist themselves under his banners, and honour him in his appointed way; they must "follow the Lord fully," if they would be partakers of his benefits. But, on the other hand, if they should submit to this ordinance, and yet be destitute of true faith, their baptism should not save them; they should perish for their unbelief: baptized or unbaptized, they should surely perish.

The parts of the text being thus explained, there remains no difficulty in the meaning of the whole as it stands connected together. No words can be found that can more forcibly express the solemn truth, which our Lord intended to convey: the import of his declaration is so obvious, that we shall not attempt to elucidate it any farther, but will proceed

II. To vindicate its reasonableness.

That men should be saved for their good works, or condemned for their gross iniquities would be thought reasonable enough; but that they should be saved by faith or condemned for unbelief, seems to many to be utterly unreasonable and absurd. But, to a candid enquirer, the equity and reasonableness of both these points may be easily and plainly evinced.

If

If faith were, as some imagine it to be, a mere assent to certain propositions, it must be confessed, that, to expect salvation by it, were preposterous in the extreme: but it has already been shewn that this is not saving faith. The man who truly believes, invariably comes to Christ in *this* way; he confesses with humility and contrition his past offences—he acknowledges from his inmost soul that he deserves the everlasting displeasure of God—he renounces every hope that might arise from his comparative goodness, his penitential sorrows, his future purposes, his actual amendment—he embraces Christ as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour—and relies simply and entirely upon the promises, which God has made to us in the Son of his love. This, I say, is the believer's experience at the first moment he truly believes in Christ. To this we might add, that, from that moment, he lives in a state of communion with his Saviour, and exerts himself to the utmost to adorn his profession by a holy life and conversation: but we intentionally omit all the fruits of faith which he afterwards produces, lest any one should be led to confound faith with its fruits, or to ascribe *that* to faith and works conjointly, which properly belongs to faith alone. Consider then a person coming in this penitent manner to Christ, and trusting in the promises of his God; is it unreasonable that such a person should be saved? Who in all the world should be saved so soon as he, who implores deliverance from his lost estate? Who should reap the benefits of Christ's death, but he, who makes *that* his only plea and dependence? Who may so justly hope to experience God's fidelity, as he who rests upon his promises? Who, in short, should enjoy all the blessings of redemption, but he, who seeks redemption in God's appointed way? Surely, if it be reasonable that Christ should "see of the travail of his soul," and that God should fulfil his own word, then is it most reasonable that he, who believes in Christ, should be saved.

With respect to the condemnation of unbelievers, we readily acknowledge that *that* also would be unreasonable, on a supposition that unbelief were nothing more than a dissent from certain propositions through a want of sufficient evidence to establish their divine authority. But unbelief is a sin of the deepest dye; and the person, who is under its dominion, is in a state as offensive to God as can well be conceived. For, in the first place, he rejects that, which has been established by every kind of evidence which a revelation from heaven can admit of: and, in rejecting it, he shews, that he is lifted up with pride and presumption: for he not only takes upon him to sit in judgment upon God, but denies his own state to be so dangerous and depraved as God has represented it. If he acknowledges himself to be a sinner, he still feels neither his guilt nor his helplessness as he ought, but "goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God." That wonderful method which the infinite *wisdom* of God has contrived for the relloration of our fallen race, he accounts "foolishness;" and substitutes, what he esteems, a safer and better method of his own. The most stupendous display

display of divine *love* and *mercy* that ever was or can be exhibited, he disregards, and thus, both "tramples under foot the Son of God, and does despite unto the Spirit of Grace:" yea, to use the language of an inspired Apostle, he "makes the only true God a liar;" for whereas God has said, that "there is no other name, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus, nor any other foundation than that which he himself has laid," the unbeliever directly contradicts him, and unequivocally declares his expectation that there is and shall be some other way of acceptance with him. Now is it unreasonable that such a person should be punished? that such a despiser of God should be left without any part in the believer's portion? Let us only apply the case to ourselves—If a child should pour contempt upon the wisest counsels of his parents, and question the truth of their most solemn protestations, should we not think him worthy of his parents' displeasure? Would not we ourselves in such a case manifest our disapprobation of his conduct? Who then are we, that we should insult GOD thus, and do it with impunity? Who are we, I say, that, when we are at liberty to withhold a blessing from an ungrateful fellow-creature, or to inflict a punishment on him adequate to his offence, *we* should not be in like manner amenable to God? If any say, "We acknowledge the sinfulness of unbelief, but think the punishment of it too severe;" I answer, 'God himself is the best judge of the malignity of sin; and he has denounced death, eternal death, as the wages due to every sin: much more therefore may it be inflicted for unbelief; since there is no sin so complicated, nor any that so effectually precludes even a possibility of salvation: we may purge away any other sin by a believing application to the blood of Christ: but by unbelief we reject the only remedy provided for us.'

Hoping that the reasonableness of our Saviour's declaration has been satisfactorily proved, we come

III. To display its excellency.

While the gospel of Christ is misrepresented and opposed by man, the angels, who are incomparably less interested in its provisions, are ever contemplating it with admiration and joy. And, if it were better understood amongst us, it could not but meet with a more favourable reception; for it has innumerable excellencies, which render it worthy of universal acceptance. Let us examine a few of its leading features.—In the first place, *it clearly defines the way of salvation*. Take any other way of salvation that ever was devised, by repentance for instance, or by sincere obedience; what inexplicable difficulties occur to our view! for, who can tell what degree of repentance will satisfy God for our breaches of his law, and be a sufficient price for heaven? Who can mark out the line which shall be drawn between those that shall be saved and those that shall perish? Who can tell what sincere obedience means? It can not mean the doing what we *will*, for that would put a murderer on the same footing with an apostle: and if it mean the doing what we *can*,
where

where is the man that can be saved by it? Where is the man who has not violated it in ten thousand instances, or, who does not violate it every day of his life? Who can truly say that for any one day he has mortified every sinful habit as much as he could, exercised every holy affection as much as he could, and practised every species of duty as much as he could? And if we can not but acknowledge that we might have done more, who shall say what degree of insincerity may be indulged without violating the law of sincere obedience? On all such plans as these we are utterly at a loss; we are at sea without a compass. But take the doctrine laid down in the text, and the way of salvation is so plain that "he who runs may read it." Let any man ask himself this question, Do I believe in Christ? Let him pursue the enquiry somewhat farther, Do I feel myself a guilty, helpless, condemned sinner? Do I renounce all dependence on my own wisdom, strength, and righteousness? Do I see that there is in Christ a fulness suited to my necessities? And do I daily, with humility and earnestness beg of God that "Christ may be made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" These questions are easy enough to be resolved; and by the answer which conscience gives to them we may know assuredly whether we be in the way to heaven or to hell. And who does not see how great an excellency this is in the gospel-salvation? Who does not see how strongly this circumstance recommends the doctrine in our text?

Another excellency in the gospel is, that it is *equally suited to all persons in all conditions*. Had any self-righteous methods of acceptance been proposed to the dying thief, what consolation could he have found? How little could he do in his few remaining hours! However he might have admired the goodness of God to others, he must have utterly despaired of mercy himself. But through faith in Christ he was enabled to depart in peace and joy. As to the murderers of our Lord, how long must it have been before they could have entertained any comfortable hope of acceptance! But the gospel affords a prospect of salvation to the very chief of sinners, and *that*, even at the eleventh hour. Nor is there any situation whatever, in which the gospel is not calculated to comfort and support the soul. *Under first convictions* of sin, what so delightful as to hear of a Saviour? *Under subsequent trials and temptations*, how would our difficulties be increased, if we did not know that "God had laid help upon One that was mighty!" The people of God, notwithstanding the hope which they have in Christ, feel great and heavy discouragements on account of the power of indwelling corruption: they seem oftentimes to be rolling a stone up the hill, which rushes impetuously down again, and necessitates them to repeat their ineffectual labours. And what would they do if their dependence were not placed on the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God? Surely they would lie down in despair, and say like those of old, "There is no hope;

I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." *Under the various calamities of life also, believers find consolation in the thought that the salvation of their souls is secured by Christ. Hence they are enabled to bear their trials with firmness: they "know how both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."* And shall not this recommend the gospel? that there is no situation, no circumstance whatever wherein it is not suited to us? that while every other method of salvation increases our anxiety, and in many instances drives us utterly to despair, the gospel always mitigates our sorrows, and often turns them into joy and triumph?

A farther excellency of the gospel is, that it *refers all the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ*. Every other plan of salvation leaves room for man to boast: but on the plan of the gospel, the most moral person upon earth must subscribe to the declaration of the Apostle, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." None, who have obtained an interest in Christ, will take the glory to themselves; the voice of all without exception is, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise." There is not any thing that distinguishes true believers more than this, That they desire to glorify Christ as the ONE source of all their blessings. In this their hearts are in perfect unison with the glorified saints, who sing continually, "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever, and ever." And is not this another excellency of the gospel? Is it at all desirable that while some in heaven are ascribing salvation to God and to the Lamb, others should ascribe salvation to God and to themselves? Surely the felicity of heaven is much increased by the obligation which they feel to Jesus, and the consideration that every particle of that bliss was "purchased for them by the blood of God" himself; nor is there so much as one amongst all the hosts of heaven, who would consent for an instant to rob the Saviour of his glory.

Lastly—The last excellency which I shall mention as belonging to the gospel, is, that it *most of all secures the practice of good works*. Here is the chief ground of jealousy with the world; and if the gospel were indeed liable to the imputations cast on it, if it gave licence to men to continue in sin, we should not hesitate to discard it as a fiction, seeing that it could never be the production of an holy God. But, as the Apostle says, "The grace of God which bringeth salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." If we appeal to antiquity, who was ever so strenuous as St. Paul in asserting the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and yet, who was ever so abundant in labours of every kind? Or who ever inculcated with greater energy and minuteness the necessity of good works? If we come to modern times, we must observe that they, who now preach justification by faith, are with the very same breath accused of

of opening heaven to all, however they may act, and yet of shutting the door against all by their unnecessary strictness: and they who receive the gospel are condemned as licentious, while they are at the same time blamed as too rigid and precise: nor is this by any means a slight proof of the efficacy of the gospel on the hearts and lives of its professors: for if their *sentiments* expose them to the former censure, it is their holy *conduct* that subjects them to the latter. We grant, and acknowledge it with sorrow, that there are some, who name the name of Christ without departing from iniquity: but must all therefore be represented as of the same stamp, and the gospel itself be considered as unfavourable to morality? Is it just, that, while ten thousand glaring sins pass unnoticed in an unbeliever, the misconduct of a few, or perhaps one single fault in "a person professing godliness" should excite a clamour against all the religious world as hypocrites? But, thanks be to God! we can appeal to experience, that faith "does work by love," and "overcome the world," and "purify the heart:" we are therefore emboldened primarily and principally to recommend the gospel from this consideration, that while the zealous advocates for self-righteousness are miserably defective in all spiritual duties, the gospel of Christ invariably stimulates us to an holy, spiritual, and unreserved obedience.

Many more excellencies of the gospel might be mentioned: but if those that have been stated will not endear it to us, it is in vain to hope that any thing which could be added would procure it a favourable reception.

And now, as there are many in this Assembly who are already engaged in the service of the sanctuary, and many others who are destined in due time to undertake the sacred office of the ministry, and as the words of my text are in a more especial manner applicable to persons so circumstanced, suffer me, with humility, yet with freedom and faithfulness, to address myself in a more especial manner to them; and let me intreat you to bear with me if I "use great boldness of speech."

I would beseech You then, my Brethren, to consider that, as the eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures is suspended on their reception or rejection of the gospel, so their acquaintance with the gospel must depend in a great measure on those who are authorised to teach it: For "faith cometh by hearing; and how shall they hear without a Preacher?" Be not offended then if I ask, whether you yourselves have "received the truth in the love of it?" If you have not, how can you properly commend it to others? How can it be expected that you should "contend earnestly for that faith" which you yourselves have never embraced; or that you should labour with becoming zeal to convert your hearers, when you yourselves are unconverted? O let it be a matter of deep and serious enquiry amongst us, whether we have felt the force and influence of the gospel? Have we ever been convinced of unbelief? Have we seen the equity and reasonableness of the judgments denounced against us while in that state? Have we,

we, under a deep conviction of our guilt and helplessness, "fled to Christ for refuge?" Have we discovered the transcendent excellency of this salvation; and do we feel in our inmost souls its perfect suitability to our own necessities, and its tendency to promote the interests of holiness? Can we say with the Apostle, that "what our eyes have seen, our ears have heard, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that, and that only, we declare" unto our people? In short, while we profess that "the ministry of reconciliation has been committed unto us," do we experience this reconciliation ourselves? The salvation of our own souls, no less than that of our fellow-sinners depends on this: indeed we are more interested in the gospel than any; for if we continue ignorant of it, we perish under the aggravated guilt of rejecting it ourselves, and of betraying the souls of others into irretrievable ruin. We, of all people under heaven, are most bound to divest ourselves of prejudice, and to labour with our whole hearts both to enjoy the blessings of the gospel and to shew ourselves patterns of its sanctifying influence. Let us then, in compliance with the divine command, "take heed to ourselves, and to our doctrine, that, in so doing, we may both save ourselves, and them that hear us."

But let others also be aware, that though they may have no responsibility attaching to them as ministers, they have as Christians. I must beg leave therefore to say unto *all*, that as "baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," so the faith which they profess can not save them, unless it be accompanied with a renovation of heart and life. Do not then be hasty to conclude that you are true believers: "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Be assured, it is no easy matter to believe: it is by no means pleasing to flesh and blood: there is not any thing to which we are naturally more averse: what our Lord said to the Jews of old may be addressed with equal propriety to the greater part of nominal Christians, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." But let it be remembered, that, however humiliating it may appear to our proud nature to renounce all self-righteousness and self-dependence, and to look for acceptance through the merits of Christ alone, it must be done: it will profit us little to have received the outward seal of his covenant, unless we possess also "the faith of God's elect." Our "lofty looks must be humbled, our haughtiness must be brought down, and the Lord alone must be exalted:" we must bow before the sceptre of his grace, or we shall be "broken in pieces with a rod of iron." If we truly and cordially "receive Him, we shall have the privilege of becoming the sons of God; and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." But "what shall our end be, if we obey not the gospel?" What prospect have we, but to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?" Behold then, life and death

death are this day set before you. Bearing, as we do, a commission from the Lord Jesus to preach his gospel, "we are debtors both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." In his sacred Name therefore we deliver our message; we are constrained to deliver it with all faithfulness, "whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear." He, who with a penitent and contrite heart believeth in the Son of God, and, by virtue of that faith, is enabled to confess him before men, and to honour him by an holy life, he shall "receive the remission of his sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ." But he, who believeth not on the Son of God, however moral he may have been in his external conduct, and whatever pleas he may urge in extenuation of his guilt, he, I say, "shall not see life, but the wrath of God shall abide upon him:" he hath practically said, "I will not have this man to reign over me;" and the despised Saviour will, ere long, issue this vindictive sentence, "Bring him hither, and slay him before me." The Decree is gone forth, nor shall all the powers of heaven or hell reverse it, "He who believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he, that believeth not, shall be damned."



Mark 16. 15, 16. *He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Many are prejudiced against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity—
Hence, while its authority is maintained, its mysteries are suppressed—
But the declaration before us is of infinite importance—

I. Explain its import

The meaning of the terms being fixed, the whole will be clear—
Salvation comprehends the everlasting happiness of the soul

[It can not be limited to any temporal deliverance—

Believers have been often subjected to persecutions and cruel deaths—

Nor was the deliverance of the saints in Jerusalem, a matter of univer-

Its import is properly expressed by St. Paul^a—] [sal concern—

This is to be obtained by "believing" in Christ

[The faith here spoken of is not a mere assent to the gospel—

The devils themselves assent to truths at which they tremble^b—

To believe aright is, to receive Christ in all his offices^c—

And such faith has the promise of eternal life^d—] [to Christ—]

Not that it is more meritorious than other graces; but it unites the soul

Damnation on the contrary imports everlasting misery

[The punishment of the wicked is elsewhere said to be eternal^e—

And the contrast in the text fully expresses its duration—

Our Lord himself puts this point beyond a doubt^f—]

This will be our portion if we "believe not" in Christ

[It is not reserved only for avowed infidels and scoffers—

They are in unbelief, who are destitute of saving faith—

And therefore must want that salvation that is annexed to faith^g—]

To faith, baptism, when practicable, must be added

[The believer must openly profess his allegiance to Christ—

But no observance of outward ordinances will profit an unbeliever^h—]

The objections ignorantly urged against this gospel lead us to

II. Vindicate its reasonableness

To ascribe salvation to good works, and damnation to evil works,
would be thought reasonable enough—

But to connect the former with faith and the latter with unbelief
is deemed absurd and delusive—

Nevertheless the reasonableness of the gospel in both these points
may be clearly evinced—

It is not unreasonable that a man should be saved by faith

[If faith were a mere assent to any doctrines, it would indeed be
unreasonable to ascribe salvation to it—

But it is an humble reliance on the promises of God in Christ Jesusⁱ—

Is it unreasonable then that he who trusts in the death of Christ should
feel its saving efficacy?—

Or, that he, who relies on God's promise, should experience his fidelity?—]

Nor is it unreasonable that a man should be damned for unbelief

[If unbelief were a mere dissent from any doctrine on account of its want-
ing sufficient evidence, such unbelief would be comparatively innocent—

^a 2 Tim 2. 10.

^b Acts 8. 13, 23.

James 2. 19.

^c John 1. 12. 1 Cor. 1. 3.

^d John 3. 14, 15, 16, 18, 36.

^e Mark 9. 43—48.

^f Mat. 25. 46.

^g 2 Theff 1. 8.

^h This is intimated by the omission of baptism in the latter
clause of the text.

ⁱ Heb. 11. 13.

But this ~~is~~ ^{is} what has been established by the strongest

Through ~~which~~ ^{which} he denies God's representation of his fallen state^k—
He accounts the wisdom of God to be foolishness,^l and his truth, a lie^m—
He pours contempt on the richest displays of love and mercyⁿ—
Such treatment *we* could not endure from a fellow-creature—
How then can we expect to treat GOD thus with impunity?—
Surely, if the wages of every sin is death, much more may it be the
reward of so complicated a sin as unbelief—]

This point satisfactorily established, we shall

III. Display its excellency

Angels admire the gospel, as we also should, if we understood its

1. It clearly defines the way of salvation [excellencies—

[All other ways of salvation are indefinite—

Who can say what portion of repentance will expiate sin and purchase

Or what sincere obedience is? or by whom performed?— [heaven?—

Or what degrees of insincerity will consist with it?—

But every one may know whether he believe in Christ—

Hence every one may form a judgment of his state before God—

— Surely this may well recommend the gospel to our acceptance—]

2. It is equally suited to all persons in all conditions

[How ill suited would any other way have been to the dying thief!—

How long must it have been before the murderers of our Lord could have
entertained a comfortable hope of acceptance!—

But the gospel affords a prospect of salvation to all, however vile^o—

And is calculated to comfort us under every affliction—

What excellency can it possess that should more endear it to us?—]

3. It refers all the glory of our salvation to Christ alone.

[Every other way of salvation leaves room for man to boast?—

But on the plan of the gospel all are equally indebted to Christ^q—

All on earth and in heaven ascribe salvation to him alone^r—

Their happiness is the more dear to them as being the purchase of his

Nor would any consent for an instant to rob him of his glory^s—] [blood—

4. It most secures the practice of good works

[If the gospel really gave a licence to sin it might well be rejected—

But it teaches us to mortify all sin, and to delight in good works^t—

This effect has in every age been manifested in the lives of God's people—

St. Paul, the great champion of the faith, was inferior to none in holiness^u—

And the contradictory objections, now urged against the preachers and

professors of the gospel, afford a strong testimony in their favor—]

APPLICATION 1. To ministers

[They, who preach the gospel, ought, above all, to experience its power—

If they do not, their condemnation will be greatly aggravated—

Let us then examine whether we have truly, and indeed believed—

And let us comply with that solemn, but encouraging injunction^x—]

2. To Christians in general

[Baptism does not supersede, but increase our obligation to believe^y—

However humiliating it be to seek salvation in another, we must submit^z—

The decree in the text is irreversible, and shall be executed in its season—]

^k Rev. 3. 17.

^l 1 Cor. 1. 18, 23.

^m 1 John 5. 10.

ⁿ Eph. 2. 7.

^o John 6. 37. Mat. 20. 9.

^p Rom. 3. 27.

^q 1 Tim. 4. 10.

^r Rev. 1. 5, and 5. 12, 13.

^s Compare Gal. 6. 14. with Rev. 4. 10.

^t Tit. 2. 11, 12.

^u 2 Cor. 12. 11.

^x 1 Tim. 4. 16.

^y 1 Peter 3. 21. &

^z Rom. 6. 4.

^B Rom. 10. 3.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE GOSPEL MESSAGE. *

I. Jesus Christ has plainly revealed to us the terms of salvation

- [God has sent *various messages* to our guilty world — } 1
 Sometimes he has used the ministry of men, and sometimes of angels —
 But *in the text* he speaks to us by his only Son ^a — }
 His words contain a *command*, a *promise*, and a *threatening* — } 2
 The duty he enjoins imports a *simple reliance* upon Christ — } 26
 Yet is it such a reliance as includes a *penitent obediential frame* — } 3
 To faith thus exercised is annexed a *promise of eternal life* ^b — } 13
 To the want of it, a *threatening of eternal death* ^c — }
 Not that this was a new method of salvation — }
 It had been *made known in types and prophecies* from the beginning — } 19
 But it was revealed by Christ with more abundant light and evidence —]

II. Those he has prescribed are honourable to God and suitable to man

- [Any other method of salvation would have set the divine perfections, as it were, at variance —
 Justice required satisfaction for our breaches of God's law —
 Truth demanded the execution of the penalty which the law denounced —
 Holiness forbade any thing unclean to enter into heaven — } 23
 But Christ has borne the penalty and satisfied divine justice —
 And by faith we are interested in all that he has done and suffered ^d —
 Thus mercy may be exercised in consistency with truth and justice —
 And every perfection of the Deity be glorified in our salvation —
 Surely such a *plan* was *worthy of an all-wise God* — }
 Nor could any other have been so suitable for fallen man — }
 What could we have hoped for from our obedience to the law? —
 We are utterly incapable of fulfilling its strict demands — }
 Yet, if we could do this in future, it would avail us nothing, unless we } 16
 could also expiate the guilt of our past transgressions —
 But by believing in Christ we obtain a perfect righteousness ^e — }
 And are made spotless in the sight of God himself ^f — }
 Nor are there any so good but they need this remedy — } 19
 Nor any so vile but they may be saved by it —]

III. All attempts to substitute any other will be vain

- [Many are the refuges to which men flee, in a season of conviction —
 They substitute their own repentance, reformation, &c. in the place of faith —
 But Christ is the only foundation of a sinner's hope ^g —
 The very offer of a Saviour supposes that we are lost — } 4
 Nor need this gospel have been published, if men could have saved themselves — } 5
 Can we suppose that Christ would have purchased this salvation at the price of his own blood, if men could have been saved without him? — }
 Or that, when he delivered so peremptory a message, he intended to leave men at liberty to substitute any plans of their own devising? — } 21
 Or that he will violate his own declarations to favour us? — }
 We may be sure that, whether we approve it or not, his counsel shall stand —
 What he delivered with such authority he will certainly fulfil — } 7
 What he so solemnly pronounced at the very hour of his ascension, he will infallibly execute at his second coming — } 8

* Mr. Claude's topics, which are here illustrated, and referred to, are subjoined for the convenience of the Reader. See the last page. The words in Italics mark the precise idea that illustrates the particular topic referred to.

^a Heb. 1. 1.

^b Acts 2. 38.

^c John 8. 24.

^d Acts 13. 39.

^e Rom. 3. 22.

^f Eph. 5. 27.

^g 1 Cor. 3. 11.

What he had then authority to publish, he will hereafter have power to enforce —] 6

IV. To embrace them will be to secure everlasting happiness

[The promise of eternal life is unequivocally made to faith ^a—

As soon as we believe in Christ, all our sins are forgiven ^b—

And we have a title to an heavenly inheritance ^c—

Nor shall we be deprived of the blessing on account either of the weakness of our faith or the greatness of our conflicts —

The person who is most strong in faith will have most comfort in his way —] 11

But the weakest believer shall not lose his reward ^d —

His faith indeed will be tried by many conflicts ^e—

But he who has been the author of it will also be the finisher ^f—]

V. To reject them will be to involve ourselves in everlasting misery

[The gospel is the brightest display of God's wisdom and goodness ^g—

And his intention in it is, to deliver men from destruction—

But while it is a mean of life to some, it will prove an occasion of death to others ^h—

We may err, and that materially, in some things, and yet be saved at last ⁱ—

But if we reject or adulterate the gospel, we must perish ^j—

Nor should this be thought "an hard saying"—

We have ruined ourselves by manifold transgressions—

Nor can we possibly restore ourselves to the divine favor—

But God has provided an adequate remedy for us—

The rejection of that can not but aggravate our guilt—

Well therefore may it aggravate our condemnation also—

He never offered such mercy to the fallen angels—

Nor had he been unjust if he had withheld it from us—

But it pleased him to deliver up his Son for us—

Shall he not then punish the despisers of his mercy?—

Surely his patience shall at last give way to wrath ^k—

And compassionate invitations be turned into indignant reproofs ^l—

Nor shall the damned themselves deny the equity of his procedure ^m—]

VI. To spread the knowledge of them should be the labour and ambition of all christians

[The benevolence and dignity of our Saviour while giving this last commission are equally worthy our notice and admiration—

In obedience to his command the apostles went forth into all the world—

And delivered their message at the peril of their lives—

To them are we indebted for all the light we enjoy—

And is not their message still as interesting as ever?—

Is it not still the christian minister's warrant and directory?—

Is it not the believer's chief solace and support?—

Yes, the Saviour's voice is still sounding in our ears—

Should we then regard it with indifference?—

Should we imitate those who took away the key of knowledge? ⁿ—

Or those who forbade the apostles to speak to the gentiles?—

Let us rather labour to spread the joyful sound—

And to diffuse the blessings of salvation through heathen lands—

Nor ever rest till that glorious promise be accomplished ^o—]

^a Acts 16. 31.

^b Acts 10. 43.

^c Rom. 8. 17.

^d In the text, respect is had, not to the strength, but to the reality of our faith.

^e 1 Tim. 6. 22.

^f Heb. 12. 2.

^g 1 Cor. 2. 7.

^h 2 Cor. 2. 15, 16.

ⁱ 1 Cor. 3. 15.

^j Gal. 1. 8, 9.

^k Heb. 3. 9, 11.

^l Compare John 7. 37. with Matt. 25. 26, 30, 41.

^m Matt. 22. 12.

ⁿ Luke 11. 52.

^o 1 Thess. 2. 16.

^p Isai. 11. 9.

I. There will be an awful difference between the states of different men in the day of judgment

It can not be that the same portion should be reserved for all

[God as our Lawgiver must manifest a regard to his own law—

And as our King must distinguish between his faithful and rebellious subjects—

But there is no sufficient difference put between them in this world a—

The wicked have no certain punishment, nor the righteous any adequate reward—

On the contrary, *they* often riot in ease, affluence, and honour, while *these* languish in pain, want, and infamy b—

The notices also, which are on the consciences of men, afford reason to expect a future day of retribution c—]

Some will be exalted to a state of unpeakable felicity

[They will be delivered from the corruption which here cleaved to them—

They will be admitted to the blissful regions of paradise—

Their capacity of comprehension and enjoyment will be greatly enlarged—

They will join an assembly of most pure and blessed spirits—

Above all, they will behold their God and Saviour d—

They will receive public testimonies of his approbation e—

An unfading crown of righteousness will be given to them f—

They will be seated with him on his throne of glory g—

They will praise and adore him with all their powers—

Nor shall their happiness know either intermission or end h—]

Others will be cast down to a state of inconceivable misery

[They will not be permitted to stand in the congregation of the righteous i—

The Judge will banish them with indignation from his presence k—

Shame and contempt shall be poured upon them before all l—

They will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone m—

God himself will pour out upon them the vials of his wrath n—

Their own consciences also will bitterly reproach them o—

They will have a distant view of the happiness they have lost p—

And an enlarged capacity to endure the torment inflicted on them—

Nor shall they have any thing to assuage their anguish q—

Not one moment's intermission of pain will be granted them—

Nor shall millions of ages terminate their misery r—]

There will be no intermediate state between these

[The idea of purgatory is an absurd fiction—

Punishment in this world does not change the nature of man—

Pharaoh was more and more hardened under ten successive plagues s—

And in hell, so far from repenting, they blaspheme God t—

The scripture assures us that no change shall take place after death u—

If Judas ever were brought to heaven, our Lord's assertion would be

Nor have the dead any prospect of annihilation v— [false x—

Not the remotest period shall determine the existence of one single soul—]

II. These states will be fixed according to men's acceptance or rejection of the gospel

It is certainly true that our works will be the criterion whereby we shall be judged in the last day

a Eccl. 9. 2.

b Ps. 73. 3—14.

c Rom. 1. 32. & 2. 15.

d 1 Cor. 13. 12.

e Matt. 25. 21.

f 2 Tim. 4. 8.

g Rev. 3. 21.

h Rev. 4. 8. and 3. 12.

i Ps. 1. 5.

k Matt. 25. 41.

l Dan. 12. 2.

m Rev. 20. 10.

n Ps. 11. 6.

o Widd. 5. 4.

p Luke 16. 23.

q Luke 16. 24. 25.

r Rev. 14. 11.

s Exod. 8. 32.

t Rev. 16. 9.

u Eccl. 9. 10. Rev.

22. 11.

v Mark 14. 21.

w Luke 20. 36. 38.

[This is frequently asserted in the holy scriptures^a—
 Our Lord has declared it in his account of the judicial process^a—
 Nor can the smallest doubt be entertained respecting it—]
 But a due reception of the gospel is a very important work
 [God has given it as his special command that we believe on his Son^b—
 And this command is as important as any in the decalogue—
 Cognizance therefore will be taken of our violations of this, as well as of
 any other, duty—]

— Indeed this work must be performed before we can do any other
 with acceptance

[Without faith in Christ we can not do any thing that is good^c—
 Nor can we derive any thing from him unless we be united to him^d—
 But faith is the only bond by which that union can be effected^e—
 'Till we believe therefore, we can be only as withered branches^f—
 Hence that striking and positive declaration of the Apostle^g—]

There is an inseparable connection between our faith and our works

[We may distinguish between them as between the cause and effect—
 But we can not possibly separate them in our practice—
 Our works are the fruits and evidences of our faith^h—
 God, who searcheth the heart, might indeed decide upon our faith as it is
 But man can judge of it only by the fruit it produces— [seated there—
 The day of judgment is for the purpose of displaying to the whole creation
 the equity of the divine procedureⁱ—
 On this account our works will be brought forth as the ground of God's
 decision—

But, as he who judges of the fruit of a tree, judges of the tree itself, so
 God, in deciding on the fruits of our faith, decides eventually on the
 faith that produced them—]

Nor shall this connection be forgotten in the day of judgment

[Our Lord will surely not forget his own repeated declarations^k—
 In enquiring into our works he will never overlook that which is the root
 and principle of all other works—
 In considering how we acted towards each other, he will not be indifferent
 about our conduct towards himself—
 We may be sure therefore that the text shall be fulfilled in that day—
 And that while the rejecters of his gospel shall perish, the true believer
 alone shall be saved—]

INFER 1. The folly of neglecting the gospel

[Men usually respect the sanctions of human laws—
 What effect then should not the sanctions of the gospel have upon us?—
 When the sentence shall be passed, can we reverse it?^l—
 If not, it must be madness to neglect this warning—
 Such folly degrades us below the beasts that perish—
 Let the past time suffice for such base and fatal conduct—]

2. The wisdom of embracing it with our whole hearts

[It is wisdom to regard things in proportion to their importance—
 But what so important as the declarations of the gospel?—
 Temporal things are nothing in comparison of heaven and hell—
 Every temporal consideration therefore should be as nothing in our eyes^m—
 We should "buy the truth, and not part with it"ⁿ at any price^o—
 This is true wisdom, however it may be accounted folly—
 And "wisdom, ere long, shall be justified of all her children"—]

^a Eccl. 12. 14. ² Cor. 5. 10.

^a Matt. 25. 34—45.

^b 1 John 3. 23.

^c John 15. 5.

^d Verse 4.

^e John 6: compare v. 35, and 56.

^f John 15. 6.

^g Heb. 11. 6.

^h Jam. 2. 18.

ⁱ Rom. 2. 5.

^j John 3. 18, 36.

^k 1 Isai. 10. 3.

^l Cor. 10. 22.

^m Isai. 1. 3.

ⁿ Luke 9. 25. and 12. 4.

^o Prov. 23. 23.

Incessant was our Lord's attention to the welfare of his church—
Regardless both of his own sufferings and glory, he was ever occupied
in that one concern—

On the very eve of his crucifixion he instituted the memorials of his
dying love—

And, at the moment of his ascension, provided for the instruction
of the world to the remotest period of time—

He had an eye to us, no less than to those of his own age and nation—

Shall we not then pay attention to his parting words?—

Shall we not consider them in reference to ourselves?—

The most important truths contained in them are obvious and
acknowledged—

Let us then consider them in a way of practical enquiry

I. What knowledge have we of the gospel?

The gospel is a most stupendous display of the divine mercy

[It reveals salvation to a ruined world a—

It discovers God himself as manifest in the flesh, and dying for sin b—

It offers, and intreats us to accept, redemption through his blood c—

It requires nothing to be done on our part to merit his favor d—

But teaches us to improve carefully what we receive freely e—]

But its true nature and design are not generally understood

[Some take up prejudices against it as a licentious system—

Nor will they be at any pains to acquire just views of its doctrines—

Others adulterate it with a mixture of human inventions f—

Or destroy its efficacy by a self-righteous dependence g—]

Let us however enquire what are our views respecting it

[Do we indeed see it to be "worthy of all acceptance?"—

Does the remedy it proposes appear suited to our necessities?—

Is it considered by us as "the power of God and the wisdom of God?" h—

Do we "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of

Has God shined in our hearts to give us these views? k— [it?" l—

Or does Satan yet blind our eyes that we can not see them? m—

Let us search whether the veil be yet taken from our hearts n—]

II. What effect have its sanctions produced upon us?

We are astonished to see how little the sanctions of the gospel are regarded

[We can form very little idea of the felicity of heaven—

Nor have we any adequate conceptions of the torments of hell—

But there is nothing grand which is not used to represent the one—

Or terrible which does not serve to describe the other—

Yet, awful as they are, few are suitably affected with them—

Motives taken from temporal and visible things have weight—

But eternal things, because invisible, engage no attention—

They are esteemed, in great measure, as "cunningly devised fables" n—]

We ask then what effect they have produced on us?

[Are we stimulated to diligence by a prospect of heaven?— — —

Does the thought of hell impress us with holy fear?—

Does a dread of the destroying angel induce us to keep our hearts
sprinkled with the blood of Jesus? o—

a 1 Tim. 1. 15.

b 1 Tim. 3. 16.

Acts 20. 28.

c 2 Cor. 5. 19, 20.

d Isai. 55. 1.

e Tit. 2. 11, 12.

f 2 Cor. 3. 17.

g Gal. 5. 3, 4.

h 1 Cor. 1. 24.

Rom. 1. 16.

i Phil. 3. 8.

k 2 Cor. 4. 6.

l Ib. verse 4.

m 2 Cor. 3. 14.

n 2 Pet. 1. 16.

o Heb. 9. 14 and 11. 28

How obdurate must we be if we be not thus influenced !—]

III. What evidence have we that our faith is scriptural and saving?

We are apt to mistake the nature of saving faith

[Some suppose it to mean no more than an assent to the gospel—

Others imagine it to consist in an assurance of our interest in Christ—

But both of these are equally remote from the truth—

The former may accord with the indulgence of every sin—

The latter is no where declared necessary to salvation—

It is indeed an high privilege to know our sins forgiven—

But we must be pardoned before we can know that we are pardoned—]

But the Scripture account of faith is clear and precise

[Faith, with respect to its nature, is a simple reliance on Christ—

In its origin, it is a free, unmerited gift of God—

And in its effects, it is invariably productive of good works—

Such was the faith of the first converts and the Saviour—]

Let us then enquire whether we be really possessed of it

[Have we ever found the difficulty of believing ?—

And under a sense of our weakness cried to God for faith ?—

Has God in answer to our prayer wrought faith in our hearts ?—

Are we enabled by it to overcome the maxims and habits of the world ?—

Are we filled by means of it with love to the brethren ?—

And are we purified by it from earthly, sensual, devilish affections ?—

Let us thus examine ourselves whether we be in the faith—

We may deceive ourselves ; but we cannot deceive God—]

ADDRESS 1. To those that are in unbelief

[The gospel was to be "preached to every creature in the world"—

And a woe is denounced against the ministers who preach it not—

What it is their duty to preach, it must be our duty to hear—

Know then that to you is the word of this salvation sent—

Put it not from you, nor adjudge yourselves unworthy of eternal life—

A time will come when you will wish that you had received it—

"Consider this ; and the Lord give you understanding in all things"—]

2. To those who are weak in faith

[You greatly dishonour God by your doubts and fears—

What could the Saviour have done more for you than he has done ?—

What reason can you have to doubt his power or willingness to save ?—

Does the guilt of sin dismay, or its power oppress your soul ?—

Christ will both expiate its guilt, and subdue its power—

Plead the promise in the text and it shall be fulfilled to you—]

3. To those who are strong in faith

[How glorious is the prospect opened to you by the Lord Jesus !—

Let it fill you with holy gratitude and joy—

And now shew a concern for the honour of your Lord and Saviour—

Shew what is the genuine scope and tendency of the gospel—

Silence by your lives the calumnies of the ungodly—

Let the efficacy of faith be seen in the excellence of your works—

And the Lord grant that you may ever be able to say with the Apostle—]

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|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ^a 1 John 5. 13. | ^a 1 Pet. 2. 6. | ^a Phil. 1. 29. | ^a Jam. 2. 26. Col. 1. 6. |
| ^a Acts 2. 37—47. | Acts 16. 30—34 | ^a Mark 9. 24. | ^a Eph. 1. 19. |
| ^a 1 John 5. 4. | ^a Gal. 5. 6. | ^a 1 Pet. 1. 22. | ^a Acts 15. 9. |
| ^a 2 Cor. 13. 5. | ^a Gal. 6. 7. | ^a 1 Cor. 9. 16. | Ezek. 34. 2. |
| ^a Matt. 10. 14. 15. | ^a 1 Thess. 4. 8. | ^a Acts 13. 26. | ^a 1b. verse 46. |
| ^a 2 Tim. 2. 7. | ^a Isai. 5. 4. | ^a 1 John 2. 1, 2. | ^a Mic. 7. 16. Rom. 6. 14. |
| ^a Tit. 3. 8. | as connected with the foregoing verses 4—7. | | |
| | | | ^a Heb. 10. 39. |

Mr. CLAUDE'S Topics referred to in the Skeleton, p. 18.

- I. Rise from species to genus.
- II. Descend from genus to species.
- III. Remark the divers characters of a vice, which is forbidden, or of a virtue, which is commanded.
- IV. Observe the relation of one subject to another.
- V. Observe whether some things be not supposed, which are not expressed.
- VI. Reflect on the person speaking or acting.
- VII. Reflect on the state of the person speaking or acting.
- VIII. Remark the time of a word or action.
- IX. Observe place.
- X. Consider the persons addressed.
- XI. Examine the particular state of persons addressed.
- XII. Consider the principles of a word or action.
- XIII. Consider consequences.
- XIV. Reflect on the end proposed in an expression or an action.
- XV. Consider whether there be any thing remarkable in the manner of the speech or action.
- XVI. Compare words and actions with similar words and actions.
- XVII. Remark the differences of words and actions on different occasions.
- XVIII. Contrast words and actions.
- XIX. Examine the grounds, or causes of an action or expression, and shew the truth or equity of it.
- XX. Remark the good and bad in expressions and actions.
- XXI. Suppose things.
- XXII. Guard against objections.
- XXIII. Consider Characters of—Majesty—Meanness—Infirmity—Necessity—Utility—Evidence, &c.
- XXIV. Remark degrees.
- XXV. Observe different interests.
- XXVI. Distinguish—define—divide—
- XXVII. Compare the different parts of the text together.

7 JU 66

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